

The Stark Beauty of Last Things

Book Club Discussion Guide

1. Nature itself plays a big role in this novel. How did you see the forces of nature play out in the various storylines and in what happens with the characters?
2. *The Stark Beauty of Last Things* opens with a map of the hamlet of Montauk. In what ways can the setting be said to be a character in the novel?
3. In *The Stark Beauty of Last Things*, the main female characters—Julienne, Theresa, and Molly—are each trying to save their homes, whether the threat is environmental, economic, or both. To what degree did you feel sympathy for all three women? Did one story resonate most for you? Why?
4. In an argument with Rob, Julienne says that something is wrong with an economic system in which housing prices can escalate to the point where people are, in essence, forced to cash out. “There was something very wrong with a world that created such an equation and locked people into it,” she thinks. Do you agree? Why or why not?
5. Did you feel that Molly and Billy made the right decisions regarding their house? How would you react in their situation?
6. How did you feel about Theresa and her decision at the end of the novel? Did you expect it? Why or why not?

7. How did you feel about the character of Clancy and how he handled the legacy he received from Otto? Did Clancy go about finding a solution to the Moorlands parcel the way you would have? Were you satisfied by the solution he came up with? How did you feel about his decision regarding keeping the house?
8. What themes did you identify in the book? Which resonated most for you?
9. Class is a theme in *The Stark Beauty of Last Things*. In which characters' lives did you feel it was especially potent?
10. What symbolism did you notice in the novel? Did you think the weather was used in a symbolic way?
11. How does the author use metaphor to describe the way Julianne and Clancy each view the other? What was the basis of Clancy's attraction to Julianne? Did you expect Clancy and Julianne to have a romantic relationship?
12. Over the course of the novel, Clancy goes from intense dislike of Theresa to feeling sympathy for her. What do you think is the reason for his change of heart? Did you expect Clancy and Theresa to have a romantic relationship?
13. Who among the main characters are most memorable to you? Why?
14. How would you describe the tone of the book and how it ties in to what you think the author is trying to convey?
15. Are there places that are special to you in the way Montauk is special to the characters in *The Stark Beauty of Last Things*? What makes these places special?